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March 2017

Smokejumper Obituary: Trankle, Hans W. (Missoula 1951)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Trankle, Hans W. (Missoula 1951)

Hans died March 8, 2017. He was born in Helibronn, Germany, and came to the U.S. at age four and resided in Billings, Montana. He jumped at Missoula 1951-54 and 56-58 before joining the first smokejumper crew in Alaska in 1959. Hans jumped out of Fairbanks 1959-60, 64-65 with a stint at West Yellowstone 1961-63.

On June 2, 1959, Hans, along with seven other jumpers, made the first fire jumps in Alaska as part of the new BLM smokejumper program.

Hans came home to Billings at age 40 and worked for the U.S. Postal Service. He and his wife made many trips back to Alaska where they had a second home in Kodiak.

(end of excerpt)